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REVIEW OF NEW BOOKS.

The Pirate. By the Author of *Waverly*, &c. London, 1821.

We have been favoured with the perusal of a portion of this new romance previous to its publication, and gladly avail ourselves of permission to make a few extracts. The inexhaustible author seems to us to have given fresh proof of the extent and diversity of his powers, of his intimate acquaintance with every variety of 'many coloured life,' and his command over the springs of human feelings and passions. 'Kenilworth' led us back to the pageants and chivalry of England in the age of Elizabeth, and introduced us to the cotemporaries of Shakspeare and Raleigh. 'The Pirate' takes us to an opposite extreme of local habitation and manners, to the wild scenery of the Shetland islands and their uncultivated and superstitious, but not less interesting, inhabitants. In these remote districts he has found new varieties of human character, and fresh fountains of poetry and romance, and little as is now known or thought of Zetland, and uncouth as the appellations are, we venture to predict, that in a short time the names of Jarlshof and Healtland, and Burgh-Westra and Magnus Troil, and Claud Halero, will be as 'familiar in our mouths as household words.' Judging from what we have read, we can assure our readers that 'The Pirate' is no way inferior to its predecessor.

The period at which the romance opens, is the latter end of the seventeenth century. We cannot better introduce the characters to our readers than by extracting from the beginning of the book.

"That long, narrow, and irregular island, usually called the Mainland of Zetland, because it is by far the largest of that archipelago, terminates, as is well known to the mariners who navigate the stormy seas which surround the Thule of

the ancients, in a cliff of tremendous height, entitled Sumburgh-Head, which presents its bare scalp and naked sides to the weight of a tremendous surge, and forms the extreme point of the isle to the south-east. This lofty promontory is constantly exposed to the current of a strong and furious tide, which setting in betwixt the Orkney and Zetland islands, and running with force only inferior to that of the Pentland Frith, takes its name from the headland we have mentioned, and is called the Roost of Sumburgh; roost being the phrase assigned in these isles to currents of this description.

"On the land side, the promontory is covered with short grass, and slopes steeply down to a little isthmus, upon which the sea has encroached in creeks, which, advancing from either side of the island, gradually work their way forward, and seem as if in a short time they would form a junction, and altogether insulate Sumburgh-Head, when what is now a cape, will become a lonely mountain islet, severed from the main land, of which it is at present the terminating extremity.

"Man, however, had in former days considered this as a remote or unlikely event; for a Norwegian chief of other times, or, as other accounts said, and as the name of Jarlshof seemed to imply, an ancient earl of the Orkneys had selected this neck of land as the place for establishing a mansion-house. It has been long entirely deserted, and the vestiges can only be discerned with difficulty; for the loose sand, borne on the tempestuous gales of these stormy regions, has overblown, and almost buried the ruins of the buildings; but in the end of the seventeenth century, a part of the earl's mansion was still entire and inhabitable. It was a rude building of rough stone, with nothing about it to gratify the eye, or to excite the imagination; a large old-fashioned house, with a very

steep roof, covered with flags composed of gray sandstone, would perhaps convey the best idea of the place to a modern reader. The windows were few, were very small in size, and were distributed up and down the building with utter contempt of regularity. Against the main building had rested, in former times, certain smaller compartments of the mansion-house, containing offices, or subordinate apartments, necessary for the accommodation of the earl's retainers and menials. But these had become ruinous; and the rafters had been taken down for fire-wood, or for other purposes; the walls had given way in many places; and, to complete the devastation, the sand had already drifted amongst the ruins, and filled up what had been once the chambers they contained, to the depth of two or three feet.

"Amid this desolation, the inhabitants of Jarlshof had contrived, by constant labour and attention, to keep in order a few roods of land, which had been inclosed as a garden, and which, sheltered by the walls of the house itself, from the relentless sea blast, produced such vegetables as the climate could bring forth, or rather as the sea-gale would permit to grow; for these islands experience even less of the rigour of cold than is encountered on the mainland of Scotland; but, unsheltered by a wall of some sort or other, it is scarce possible to raise even the most ordinary culinary vegetables; and as for shrubs or trees they are entirely out of the question, such is the force of the sweeping sea-blast.

"At a short distance from the mansion, and near to the sea-beach, just where the creek forms a sort of imperfect harbour, in which lay three or four fishing-boats, there were a few most wretched cottages for the inhabitants and tenants of the township of Jarlshof, who held the whole district of the landlord upon such terms as were in those days usually granted to persons of

this description, and which of course were hard enough. The landlord himself resided upon an estate which he possessed in a more eligible situation, in a different part of the island, and seldom visited his possessions at Sumburgh-Head. He was an honest, plain Zetland gentleman, somewhat passionate, the necessary result of being surrounded by dependants; and somewhat over-convivial in his habits, the consequence, perhaps, of having too much time at his disposal; but frank-tempered, and generous to his people, and kind and hospitable to strangers. He was descended also of an old and noble Norwegian family; a circumstance which rendered him dearer to the lower orders, most of whom are of the same race; while the lairds, or proprietors, are generally of Scottish extraction, who, at this early period, were even still considered as strangers and intruders. Magnus Troil, who deduced his descent from the very earl who was supposed to have founded Jarls-hof, was peculiarly of this opinion.

"The present inhabitants of Jarls-hof had experienced on several occasions, the kindness and good will of the proprietor of the territory. When Mr. Mertoun, such was the name of the present inhabitant of the old mansion, first arrived in Zetland, some years before the story commences, he had received at the house of Mr. Troil that warm and cordial hospitality for which the islands are distinguished. No one asked him whence he came, where he was going, what was his purpose in visiting so remote a corner of the empire, or what was likely to be the term of his stay. He arrived a perfect stranger, yet was instantly overpowered by a succession of invitations; and in each house which he visited, he found a home as long as he chose to accept it, and lived as one of the family, unnoticed and unnoticed, until he thought proper to remove to some other dwelling. This apparent indifference to the rank, character, and qualities of their guest, did not arise from apathy on the part of his kind hosts, for the islanders had their full share of natural curiosity; but their delicacy deemed it would be an infringement upon the laws of hospitality, to ask questions which their guest might have found

it difficult or unpleasing to answer; and instead of endeavouring, as is usual in other countries, to wring out of Mr. Mertoun such communications as he might find it agreeable to withhold, the considerate Zetlanders contented themselves with eagerly gathering up such scraps of information as could be collected in the course of conversation.

"But the rock in an Arabian desert is not more reluctant to afford water, than Mr. Basil Mertoun was niggard in imparting his confidence, even incidentally; and certainly the politeness of the gentry of Thule was never put to a more severe task than when they felt that good-breeding enjoined them to abstain from inquiring into the situation of so mysterious a personage.

"All that was actually known of him was easily summed up. Mr. Mertoun had come to Lerwick, then rising into some importance, but not yet acknowledged as the principal town of the island, in a Dutch vessel, accompanied only by his son, a handsome boy of about fourteen years old. His own age might exceed forty. The Dutch skipper introduced him to some of the very good friends with whom he used to barter gin and gingerbread for little Zetland bullocks, smoked geese, and stockings of lambs' wool; and although *meinheer* could only say, that '*Meinheer Mertoun* hab bay his bassage like one gentlemen, and hab given a Kreitz-dollar beside to the crew,' this introduction served to establish the Dutchman's passenger in a respectable circle of acquaintances, which gradually enlarged, as it appeared that the stranger was a man of considerable acquirements.

"This discovery was made as it were *per force*; for Mertoun was as unwilling to speak upon general subjects, as upon his own affairs. But he was sometimes led into discussions, which showed, as it were in spite of himself, the scholar and the man of the world; and, at other times, as if in requital of the hospitality which he experienced, he seemed to compel himself, against his fixed nature, to enter into the society of those around him, especially when it assumed the grave, melancholy, or satirical cast, which best suited the temper of his own

mind. Upon such occasions, the Zetlanders were universally of opinion that he must have had an excellent education, neglected only in one striking particular, namely, that Mr. Mertoun scarce knew the stem of a ship from the stern; and in the management of a boat, a cow could not be more ignorant. It seemed astonishing such gross ignorance of the most necessary art of life, (in the Zetland Isles at least,) should subsist along with his accomplishments in other respects; but so it was.

"Unless called forth in the manner we have mentioned, the habits of Basil Mertoun were retired and gloomy. From loud mirth he instantly fled; and even the moderated cheerfulness of a friendly party, had the invariable effect of throwing him into deeper dejection than even his usual demeanour indicated.

"Women are always particularly desirous of investigating mystery, and of alleviating melancholy, especially when these circumstances are united in a handsome man about the prime of life. It is possible, therefore, that amongst the fair-haired and blue-eyed daughters of Thule, this mysterious and pensive stranger might have found some one to take upon herself the task of consolation, had he shown any willingness to accept such kindly offices; but, far from doing so, he seemed even to shun the presence of the sex, to which in our distresses, whether of mind or body, we generally apply for pity and comfort.

"To these peculiarities Mr. Mertoun added another, which was particularly disagreeable to his host and principal patron, Magnus Troil. This magnate of Zetland, descended by the father's side, as we have already said, from an ancient Norwegian family by the marriage of its representative with a Danish lady, held the devout opinion that a cup of Geneva or Nantz was a specific against all cares and afflictions whatsoever. These were remedies to which Mr. Mertoun never applied; his drink was water, and water alone, and no persuasion or entreaties could induce him to taste any stronger beverage than was afforded by the pure spring. Now this Magnus Troil could not tolerate; it was a defiance to the ancient northern laws of conviviality, which

for his own part, he had so rigidly observed, that although he was wont to assert that he had never in his life gone to bed drunk, (that is, in his own sense of the word,) it would have been impossible to prove that he had ever resigned himself to slumber in a state of actual and absolute sobriety. It may be therefore asked, what did this stranger bring into society to compensate the displeasure given by his austere and abstemious habits? He had, in the first place, that manner and self-importance which marks a person of some consequence; and although it was conjectured that he could not be rich, yet it was certainly known by his expenditure that neither was he absolutely poor. He had, besides, some powers of conversation, when, as we have already hinted, he chose to exert them, and his misanthropy or aversion to the business and intercourse of ordinary life, was often expressed in an antithetical manner, which passed for wit, when better was not to be had. Above all, Mr. Mertoun's secret seemed impenetrable, and his presence had all the interest of a riddle, which men love to read over and over, because they cannot find out the meaning of it.

"Notwithstanding these recommendations, Mertoun differed in so many material points from his host, that after he had been for some time a guest at his principal residence, Magnus Troil was agreeably surprised when, one evening after they had sate two hours in absolute silence, drinking brandy and water, that is, Magnus drinking the alcohol, and Mertoun the element—the guest asked his host's permission to occupy, as his tenant, this deserted mansion of Jarlishof, at the extremity of the territory called Dunrossness, and situated just beneath Sumburgh-Head. 'I shall be handsomely rid of him,' quoth Magnus to himself, 'and his kill-joy visage will never again stop the bottle in its round. His departure will ruin me in lemons, however, for his mere look was quite sufficient to sour a whole ocean of punch.'

"Yet the kind-hearted Zetlander generously and disinterestedly remonstrated with Mr. Mertoun on the solitude and inconveniences to which he was about to subject himself. 'There were scarce,' he said,

'even the most necessary articles of furniture in the old house—there was no society within many miles—for provisions, the principal article of food would be sour sillocks, and his only company gulls and gannets.'

" 'My good friend,' replied Mertoun, 'if you could have named a circumstance which would render the residence more eligible to me than any other, it is that there would be neither human luxury nor human society near the place of my retreat; a shelter from the weather for my own head, and for the boy's, is all I seek for; so name your rent, Mr. Troil, and let me be your tenant at Jarlishof.'

" 'Rent?' answered the Zetlander; 'why, no great rent for an old house which no one has lived in since my mother's time, God rest her; and as for shelter, the old walls are thick enough, and will bear many a bang yet. But, Heaven love you, Mr. Mertoun, think what you are purposing. For one of us to live at Jarlishof, were a wild scheme enough; but you, who are from another country, whether English, Scotch, or Irish, no one can tell—'

" 'Nor does it greatly matter,' said Mertoun, somewhat abruptly.

" 'Not a herring's scale,' answered the laird; 'only that I like you the better for being no Scot, as I trust you are not one. Hither they have come like the clack-geese; every chamberlain has brought over a flock of his own name, and his own hatching, for what I know, and here they roost for ever—catch them returning to their own barren Highlands or Lowlands, when they have tasted our Zetland beef, and seen our bonny voes and lochs. No, sir, (here Magnus proceeded with great animation, sipping from time to time the half-diluted spirit, which at the same time animated his resentment against the intruders, and enabled him to endure the mortifying reflections which it suggested), 'No, sir, the ancient days and the genuine manners of these islands are no more; for our ancient possessors,—our Patersons, our Feas, our Schlagbrenners, our Yhiorbiorns, have given place to Giffords, Scotts, Mouatts, men whose names bespeak them or their ancestors strangers to the soil which we the Troils, have inhabited long before the days of Turf-Einar, who first taught

these Isles the mystery of burning peat for fuel, and who has been handed down to a grateful posterity by a name which records the discovery.'

" 'This was a subject upon which the potentate of Jarlishof was usually very diffuse, and Mertoun saw him enter upon it with pleasure, because he knew he would not be called upon to contribute any aid to the conversation, and might therefore indulge his own saturnine humour while the Norwegian Zetlander declaimed on the change of times and inhabitants. But just as Magnus had arrived at the melancholy conclusion, 'how probable it was, that in another century scarce a merk—scarce even an ure of land, would be in possession of the Norse inhabitants, the true Udallers* of Zetland,' he recollected the circumstances of his guest, and stopped suddenly short. 'I do not say all this,' he added, interrupting himself, 'as if I were unwilling that you should settle on my estate, Mr. Mertoun—but for Jarlishof, the place is a wild one—Come from where you will, I warrant you will say, like other travellers, you came from a better climate than ours, for so say you all. And yet you think of a retreat which the very natives run away from. Will you not take your glass?—(This was to be considered as interjectional).—'Then here's to you.'

" 'My good sir,' answered Mertoun, 'I am indifferent to climate; if there is but air enough to fill my lungs, I care not if it be the breath of Arabia or of Lapland.'

" 'Air enough you may have,' answered Magnus, 'no lack of that; somewhat damp, strangers allege it to be, but we know a corrective for that—here's to you Mr. Mertoun—you must learn to do so, and to smoke a pipe; and then, as you say, you will find the air of Zetland equal to that of Arabia. But have you seen Jarlishof?'

" 'The stranger intimated he had not.

" 'Then,' replied Magnus, 'you have no idea of your undertaking. If you think it a comfortable road—'

* The Udallers are the *allodial* possessors of Zetland, who hold their possessions under the old Norwegian law, instead of the feudal tenures introduced among them from Scotland.

stead like this, with the house situated on the side of an inland voe,* that brings the herrings up to your door, you are mistaken, my heart. At Jarlishof you will see nought but the wild waves tumbling on the bare rocks, and the Roost of Sumburgh running at the rate of fifteen knots an hour."

"I shall see nothing at least of the current of human passions," replied Mertoun.

"You will hear nothing but the clanging and screaming of scarfs, sheer-waters, and sea gulls, from day-break till sun-set."

"I will compound, my friend," replied the stranger, "so that I do not hear the chattering of women's tongues."

"Ah," said the Norman, "that is because you hear just now my little Minna and Brenda singing in the garden with your Mordaunt. Now, I would rather listen to their little voices, than the sky-lark which I once heard in Caithness, or the nightingale that I have read of.—What will the girls do for want of their playmate Mordaunt?"

"They will shift for themselves," answered Mertoun; "younger or older they will find playmates or dupes; but the question is, Mr. Troil, will you let to me, as your tenant, this old mansion of Jarlishof?"

"Gladly, since you make it your option to live in a spot so desolate."

"And for the rent?" continued Mertoun.

"The rent?" replied Magnus; "hum—why you must have the bit of *plantie cruive*, which they once called a garden, and a right in the *seathold*, and a sixpenny merk of land, that the tenants may fish for you:—eight *tispunds* of butter, and eight shillings sterling yearly is not too much?"

"Mr. Mertoun agreed to terms so moderate, and from thenceforward resided chiefly at the solitary mansion which we have described in the beginning of this chapter, conforming not only without complaint, but, as it seemed, with a sullen pleasure, to all the privations which so wild and desolate a situation necessarily imposed on its inhabitants."

Mordaunt Mertoun soon becomes

* "Salt-water lake."

a favourite in the neighbourhood, and is evidently the hero, as it is called, of the tale. Magnus Troil has two daughters, of whom we extract the following description.

"From her mother Minna inherited the stately form and dark eyes, the raven locks and finely-pencilled brows, which showed she was, on one side at least, a stranger to the blood of Thule. Her cheek,

O call it fair, not pale, was so slightly and delicately tinged with the rose, that many thought the lily had an undue proportion in her complexion. But in that predominance of the paler flower, there was nothing sickly or languid; it was the true natural complexion of health, and corresponded in a peculiar degree with features which seemed calculated to express a contemplative and high-minded character. When Minna Troil heard a tale of wo or of injustice, her blood rushed to her cheeks, and showed plainly how warm it beat, notwithstanding the generally serious, composed, and retiring disposition, which her countenance and demeanour seemed to exhibit. If strangers sometimes conceived that these fine features were clouded by melancholy, for which her age and situation could scarce have given occasion, they were soon satisfied, upon further acquaintance, that the placid mild quietude of her disposition, and the mental energy of a character which was but little interested in ordinary and trivial occurrences, was the real cause of her gravity, and most men when they knew that her melancholy had no ground in real sorrow, and was only the aspiration of a soul bent on more important objects, than those by which she was surrounded, might have wished her whatever could add to her happiness, but could scarce have desired that, graceful as she was in her natural and unaffected seriousness, she should change that deportment for one more gay. In short, notwithstanding our wish to have avoided that hackneyed simile of an angel, we cannot avoid saying there was something in the serious beauty of her aspect, in the measured, yet graceful ease of her motions, in the music of her voice, and the serene purity of her eye, that seemed as if Minna Troil be-

longed naturally to some higher and better sphere, and was only the chance visitant of a world that was scarce worthy of her.

"The scarce less beautiful, equally lovely, and equally innocent Brenda, was of a complexion as differing from her sister, as they differed in character, taste, and expression. Her profuse locks were of that paly brown which receives from the passing sun-beam a tinge of gold, but darkens again when the ray has passed from it. Her eye, her mouth, the beautiful row of teeth, which, in her innocent vivacity, were frequently disclosed; the fresh, yet not too bright glow of a healthy complexion, tinging a skin like the drifted snow, spoke her genuine Scandinavian descent. A fairy form, less tall than that of Minna, but even more finely moulded into symmetry—a careless, and almost childish lightness of step,—an eye that seemed to look on every object with pleasure, from a natural and serene cheerfulness of disposition, attracted even more general admiration than the charms of her sister, though perhaps that which Minna did excite, might be of a more intense as well as a more reverential character.

"The dispositions of these lovely sisters were not less different than their complexions. In the kindly affections, neither could be said to excel the other, so much were they attached to their father and to each other. But the cheerfulness of Brenda mixed itself with the every day business of life, and seemed inexhaustible in its profusion. The less buoyant spirit of her sister appeared to bring to society a continued wish to be interested and pleased with what was going forward, but was rather placidly carried along with the stream of mirth and pleasure, than disposed to aid its progress by any efforts of her own. She endured mirth, rather than enjoyed it; and the pleasures in which she most delighted, were those of a graver and more solitary cast. The knowledge which is derived from books was beyond her reach. Zetland afforded few opportunities, in those days, of studying the lessons bequeathed

By dead men to their kind; and Magnus Troil, such as we have

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described him, was not a person within whose mansion the means of such knowledge was to be acquired. But the book of nature was before Minna, that noblest of volumes, where we are ever called to wonder and to admire, even when we can not understand. The plants of those wild regions, the shells on the shores, and the long list of feathered clans which haunt their cliffs and eyeries, were as well known to Minna Troil, as to the most experienced of the fowlers. Her powers of observation were wonderful, and little interrupted by other tones of feeling. The information which she acquired by habits of patient attention, were indelibly riveted in a naturally powerful memory. She had also a high feeling for the solitary and melancholy grandeur of the scenes in which she was placed. The ocean, in all its varied forms of sublimity and terror—the tremendous cliffs that resound to the ceaseless roar of the billows, and the clang of the sea fowl, had for Minna a charm in almost every state in which the changing seasons exhibited them. With the enthusiastic feelings proper to the romantic race from which her mother descended, the love of natural objects was to her a passion capable of not only occupying, but at times of agitating her mind. Scenes upon which her sister looked with a sense of transient awe or emotion, which vanished on her return from witnessing them, continued long to fill Minna's imagination, not only in solitude, and in the silence of the night, but in the hours of society. So that sometimes when she sat like a beautiful statue, a present member of the domestic circle, her thoughts were far absent, wandering on the wild sea-shore and amongst the yet wilder mountains of her native isles. And, yet, when recalled to conversation, and mingling in it with interest, there were few to whom her friends were more indebted for enhancing its enjoyments; and, although something in her manners claimed deference (notwithstanding her early youth) as well as affection, even her gay, lovely, and amiable sister was not more generally beloved than the more retired and pensive Minna.

"Indeed the two lovely sisters were not only the delight of their

friends, but the pride of those islands, where the inhabitants of a certain rank were formed, by the remoteness of their situation and the general hospitality of their habits, into one friendly community. A wandering poet and parcel-musician, who, after going through various fortunes, had returned to end his days as he could in his native islands, had celebrated the daughters of Magnus in a poem, which he entitled *Night and Day*; and in his description of Minna, might almost be thought to have anticipated, though only in a rude outline, the exquisite lines of lord Byron,—

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

"Their father loved the maidens both so well, that it might be difficult to say which he liked best, saying that, perchance, he loved his graver damsel better in the walk without doors, and his merry maiden better by the fire side; that he more desired the society of Minna when he was sad, and that of Brenda when he was mirthful; and, what was nearly the same thing, preferred Minna before noon, and Brenda after the glass had circulated in the evening."

Among the inhabitants of this vicinity is a new comer, a certain Triptolemus Yellowley, the son of a Yorkshireman, who had attempted farming in Scotland, and having there married a damsel of some worldly possessions, became the father of Triptolemus, and a daughter named Barbara.

"A laughing philosopher, the Democritus of our day, once compared human life to a table pierced with a number of holes, each of which has a pin made exactly to fit it, but which pins being stuck in hastily, and without selection, chance leads inevitably to the most awkward mistakes. 'For, how often do we see,' the orator pathetically concluded—'how often, I say, do we see the round man stuck into the three-cornered hole?' This new illustration of the vagaries of fortune set every one present into convulsions of laughter, excepting one fat alderman, who seemed to make

the case his own, and insisted that it was no jesting matter. To take up the simile, however, which is an excellent one, it is plain that Triptolemus Yellowley had been shaken out of the bag at least a hundred years too soon. If he had come on the stage in our own time, that is, if he had flourished at any time within these thirty or forty years, he could not have missed to have held the office of vice-president of some eminent agricultural society, and to have transacted all the business thereof under the auspices of some noble duke or lord, who, as the matter might happen, either knew, or did not know, the difference betwixt a horse and a cart, and a cart horse. He could not have missed such preferment, for he was exceedingly learned in all those particulars, which, being of no consequence in actual practice, go of course a great way to constitute the character of a connoisseur in any art, but especially in agriculture. But, alas! Triptolemus Yellowley had, as we already have hinted, come into the world at least a century too soon; for, instead of sitting in an arm-chair with a hammer in his hand, and a bumper of port before him, giving forth the toast—'To breeding, in all its branches,' his father planted him betwixt the stils of a plough, and invited him to guide the oxen, on whose beauties he would, in our day, have descanted, and whose rumps he would not have goaded, but have carved. Old Jasper complained, that although no one talked so well of common and several, wheat and rape, fallow and lea, as his learned son, (whom he always called Toli-mus) yet, "dang it," added the Seneca, "nought thrives wi' un—nought thrives wi' un." It was still worse, when Jasper, becoming frail and ancient, was obliged, as happened in the course of a few years, gradually to yield up the reins of government to the academical neophyte.

"As if Nature had meant him a spite, he had got one of the *dourest* and most untractable farms on the Mearns, to try conclusions withal, a place which seemed to yield every thing but what the agriculturist wanted; for there were plenty of thistles, which indicates dry land; and store of fern, which is said to

intimate deep land; and nettles, which show where lime hath been applied; and deep furrows in the most unlikely spots, which intimated that it had been cultivated in former days by the Peghts, as popular tradition bore. There was also plenty of stones to keep the ground warm, according to the creed of some farmers, and great abundance of springs to render it cool and sappy, according to the theory of others. It was in vain that, acting alternately on these opinions, poor Triptolemus endeavoured to avail himself of the supposed capabilities of the soil. No kind of butter that might be churned could be made to stick upon his own bread, any more than on that of poor Tusser, whose Hundred Points of Good Husbandry, so useful to others of his day, were never to himself worth as many pennies.

"In fact, excepting an hundred acres of infield, to which old Jasper had early seen the necessity of limiting his labours, there was not a corner of the farm fit for any thing but to break plough-graith, and kill cattle. And, then, as for the part which was really tilled with some profit, the expense of the farming establishment of Triptolemus, and his disposition to experiment, soon got rid of any good arising from the cultivation of it. 'The carles and the cart-avers,' he confessed, with a sigh, speaking of his farm-servants and horses, 'make it all, and the carles and cart-avers eat it all'; a conclusion which might sum up the year-book of many a gentleman-farmer.

"Matters would have soon been brought to a close with Triptolemus in the present day. He would have got a bank-credit, manœuvred with wind-bills, dashed out upon a large scale, and soon have seen his crop and stock sequestered by the sheriff; but in those days a man could not ruin himself so easily. The whole Scottish tenantry stood upon the same level flat of poverty, so that it was extremely difficult to find any vantage ground, by climbing up to which a man might have an opportunity of actually breaking his neck with some eclat. They were pretty much in the situation of people, who, being totally without credit, may indeed suffer from indigence, but cannot possibly become bank-

rupt. Besides, notwithstanding the failure of Triptolemus' projects, there was to be balanced against the expenditure which they occasioned, all the savings which the extreme economy of his sister Barbara could effect; and in truth her exertions were wonderful. She might have realised, if any one could, the idea of the learned philosopher, who pronounced that sleeping was a fancy, and eating but a habit, and who appeared to the world to have renounced both, until it was unhappily discovered that he had an intrigue with the cook-maid of the family, who indemnified him for his privations by giving him private entree to the larder, and to a share of her own couch. But no such deceptions were practised by Barbara Yellowley. She was up early and down late, and seemed, to her over-watched and over-tasked maidens, to be as *wakerife* as the cat herself. Then, for eating, it appeared that the air was a banquet to her, and she would fain have made it so to her retinue. Her brother, who, besides being lazy in his person, was somewhat luxurious in his appetite, would willingly now and then have tasted a mouthful of animal food, were it but to know how his sheep were fed off; but a proposal to eat a child could not have startled Mistress Barbara more; and, being of a compliant and easy disposition, Triptolemus reconciled himself to the necessity of a perpetual Lent, too happy when he could get a scrap of butter to his oaten cake, or (as they lived on the banks of the Eske) escape the daily necessity of eating salmon, whether in or out of season, six days out of the seven.

"But although Mrs. Barbara brought faithfully to the joint stock all savings which her awful powers of economy accomplished to scrape together, and although the dower of their mother was by degrees expended, or nearly so, in aiding them upon extreme occasions, the term at length approached when it seemed impossible that they could sustain the conflict any longer against the evil star of Triptolemus, as he called it himself, or the natural result of his absurd speculations, as it was termed by others. Luckily, at this sad crisis, a god jumped down to their relief out of a machine. In plain English, the noble lord, who

owned their farm, arrived at his mansion-house in their neighbourhood, with his coach and six and his running footmen, in the full splendour of the seventeenth century.

"This person of quality was the son of the nobleman who had brought the ancient Jasper into the country from Yorkshire, and he was, like his father, a fanciful and scheming man. He had schemed well for himself, however, amid the mutations of time, having obtained, for a certain period of years, the administration of the remote islands of Orkney and Zetland, for payment of a certain rent, with the right of making the most of whatever was the property or revenue of the crown in these districts, under the title of Lord Chamberlain. Now, his lordship had become possessed with a notion, in itself a very true one, that much might be done to render this grant available, by improving the culture of the crown lands, both in Orkney and Zetland; and then, having some acquaintance with our friend Triptolemus, he thought (rather less happily) that he might prove a person capable of furthering his schemes. He sent for him to the great Hall-house, and was so much edified by the way in which our friend laid down the law upon every given subject, that he lost no time in securing the co-operation of so valuable an assistant."

At the house of this philosophical agriculturalist Mordaunt is forced to stop by a violent storm on his way home from the residence of Magnus Troil, and here we are introduced to a character who is evidently destined to occupy a considerable portion of the work.

"As she spoke, a woman tall enough almost to touch the top of the door with her cap, stepped into the room, signing the cross as she entered, and pronouncing, with a solemn voice, 'The blessing of God and Saint Ronald on the open door, and their braid malison and mine upon close-handed churls!'

"And wha are ye, that are sae bauld wi' your blessing and banning in other folks' houses? What kind of country is this, that folks cannot sit quiet for an hour, and serve heaven, and keep their bit gear tegither, without gangrel men and women coming thiggung and sornung

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one after another, like a string of wild geese?"

"This speech, the understanding reader will easily saddle on Mistress Baby, and what effects it might have produced on the last stranger, can only be matter of conjecture; for the old servant and Mordaunt applied themselves at once to the party addressed, in order to deprecate her resentment; the former speaking to her some words of Norse, in a tone of intercession, and Mordaunt saying in English, 'They are strangers, Norna, and know not your name or qualities; they are unacquainted, too, with the ways of this country, and therefore we must hold them excused for their lack of hospitality.'

"I lack no hospitality, young man," said Triptolemus, '*miserris succurrere disco*—the goose that was destined to roost in the chimney till Michaelmas, is boiling in the pot for you; but if we had twenty geese, I see we are like to find mouths to eat them every feather—this must be amended.'

"What must be amended, sordid slave?" said the stranger Norna, turning at once upon him with an emphasis that made him start—'What must be amended? Bring hither, if thou wilt, thy new fangled coulters, spades, and harrows, alter the implements of our fathers from the ploughshare to the mouse-trap; but know thou art in the land that was won of old by the flaxen-haired Kemps of the North, and leave us their hospitality at least, to show we come of what was once noble and generous. I say to you beware; while Norna looks forth at the measureless waters, from the crest of Fitful head, something is yet left that resembles power of defence. If the men of Thule have ceased to be champions, and to spread the banquet for the raven, the women have not forgotten the arts that lifted them of yore into queens and prophetesses.'

"The woman who pronounced this singular tirade, was as striking in appearance as extravagantly lofty in her pretensions and in her language. She might well have represented on the stage, so far as features, voice, and stature were concerned, the Bonduca or Boadicea of the Britons, or the sage Velleda, Aurinia, or any other fated Pythoness,

who ever led to battle a tribe of the ancient Goths. Her features were high and well formed, and would have been handsome but for the ravages of time, and the effects of exposure to the severe weather of her country. Age, and perhaps sorrow had quenched, in some degree, the fire of a dark blue eye, whose hue almost approached to black, and had sprinkled snow on such part of her tresses as had escaped from under her cap, and were dishevelled by the rigour of the storm. Her upper garment, which dropped with water, was of a coarse dark-coloured stuff, called Wadmaral, then much used in the Zetland islands, as also in Iceland and Norway. But as she threw this cloak back from her shoulders, a short jacket, of dark-blue velvet, stamped with figures, became visible, and the vest, which corresponded to it, was of crimson colour, and embroidered with tarnished silver. Her girdle was plaited with silver ornaments, cut into the shape of planetary signs—her blue apron was embroidered with similar devices, and covered a petticoat of crimson cloth. Strong thick enduring shoes, of the half-dressed leather of the country, were tied with straps like those of the Roman buskins, over her scarlet stockings. She wore in her belt, an ambiguous looking weapon, which might pass for a sacrificing knife or dagger, as the imagination of the spectator chose to assign to the wearer the character of a priestess or of a sorceress. In her hand she held a staff, squared on all sides, and engraved with Runic characters and figures, forming one of those portable and perpetual calendars which were used among the ancient natives of Scandinavia, and which, to a superstitious eye, might have passed for a divining rod.

"Such were the appearance, features, and attire of Norna of the Fitful head, upon whom many of the inhabitants of the island looked with observance, many with fear, and almost all with a sort of veneration. Less pregnant circumstances of suspicion would, in any other part of Scotland, have exposed her to the investigation of those cruel inquisitors, who were then often invested with the delegated authority of the privy-council, for the purpose of persecuting, torturing, and finally consigning to the flames, those

who were accused of witchcraft or sorcery. But superstitions of this nature pass through two stages ere they become entirely obsolete. Those supposed to be possessed of supernatural powers, are venerated in the earlier stages of society. As religion and knowledge increase, they are first held in hatred and horror, and are finally regarded as impostors. Scotland was in the second state—the fear of witchcraft was great, and the hatred against those suspected of it intense. Zetland was as yet a little world by itself, where, among the lower and ruder classes, so much of the ancient northern superstition remained, as cherished the original veneration for those affecting supernatural knowledge and power over the elements, which made a constituent part of the ancient Scandinavian creed. At least if the natives of Thule admitted that one class of magicians performed their feats by their alliance with Satan, they devoutly believed that others dealt with spirits of a different and less odious class—the ancient dwarfs, called, in Zetland, Trows or Drows, the modern fairies, and so forth.

"Among those who were supposed to be in league with disembodied spirits, this Norna, descended from, and representative of a family which had long pretended to such gifts, was so eminent, that the name assigned to her which signifies one of those fatal sisters who weave the web of human fate, had been conferred in honour of her supernatural powers. The name by which she had been actually christened was carefully concealed by herself and her parents; for to the discovery they superstitiously annexed some fatal consequences. In these times, the doubt only occurred whether her supposed powers were acquired by lawful means. In our days, it would have been questioned whether she was an impostor, or whether her imagination was so deeply impressed with the mysteries of her supposed art, that she might be in some degree a believer in her own pretensions to supernatural knowledge. Certain it is, that she performed her part with such undoubted confidence, and such striking dignity of look and action, and evinced, at the same time, such strength of language, and such energy of pur-

pose, that it would have been difficult for the greatest sceptic to have doubted the reality of her enthusiasm, though he might smile at the pretensions to which it gave rise."

On the succeeding day Mordaunt walks out with his father to Sum-burgh-Head, and here the author has put forth so much of his admirable power in the description of the shipwreck and the plunder, that we are induced to give a long extract.

"The face of that lofty cape is composed of the soft and crumbling stone called sand-flag, which gradually yields to the action of the atmosphere, and becomes split into large masses, that hang loose upon the verge of the precipice, and, detached from it by the fury of the tempests, often descend with great fury to the vexed abyss which lashes the foot of the rock. Numbers of these huge fragments lie strewn beneath the rocks from which they have descended, and amongst these the tide foams and rages with a fury peculiar to these latitudes.

"At the period when Mertoun and his son looked from the verge of the precipice, the wide sea still heaved and swelled with the agitation of the yesterday's storm, which had been far too violent to subside speedily. The tide therefore poured on the headland with a fury deafening to the ear, and dizzying to the eye, threatening instant destruction to whatever might be at the time involved in its current. The sight of nature in her magnificence, or in her beauty, or in her terrors, has at all times an overpowering interest, which even habit cannot greatly weaken; and both father and son sate themselves down on the cliff to look out upon that unbounded war of waters, which rolled in their wrath to the foot of the precipice.

"At once Mordaunt, whose eyes were sharper, and probably his attention more alert than that of his father, started up and exclaimed, 'God in Heaven! there is a vessel in the Roost.'

"Mertoun looked to the north-westward, and an object was visible amid the rolling tide. 'She shows no sail,' he observed; and immediately added, after looking at the object through his spy-glass, 'she is dismayed, and lies a sheer-hulk upon the water.'

"And is drifting on the Sum-burgh-Head,' said Mordaunt, struck with horror, 'without the slightest means of weathering the cape.'

"She makes no effort,' replied his father; 'she is probably deserted by her crew.'

"And in such a day as yesterday,' replied Mordaunt, 'when no open boat could live were she manned with the best men ever handled an oar—all must have perished.'

"It is most probable,' said his father, with stern composure; 'and one day, sooner or later, all must have perished. What signifies whether the fowler, whom nothing escapes, caught them up at one swoop from yonder shattered deck, or whether he clutched them individually, as chance gave them to his grasp? What signifies it?—the deck, the battle field are scarce more fatal to us than our table and our bed; and we are saved from the one, merely to drag out a heartless and wearisome existence, till we perish at the other. Would the hour were come—that hour which reason would teach us to wish for, were it not that nature has implanted the fear of it so strongly within us. You wonder at such a reflection, because life is yet new to you. Ere you have attained my age, it will be the familiar companion of your thoughts.'

"Surely, sir,' replied Mordaunt, 'such distaste to life is not the necessary consequence of advanced age?'

"To all who have sense to estimate that which it is really worth,' said Mertoun. 'Those who, like Magnus Troil, possess so much of the animal impulses about them, as to derive pleasure from sensual gratification, may perhaps, like the animals, feel pleasure in mere existence.'

"Mordaunt liked neither the doctrine nor the example. He thought a man who discharged his duties towards others as well as the good old udaller, had a better right to have the sun shine fair on his setting, than that which he might derive from mere insensibility. But he let the subject drop; for to dispute with his father, had always the effect of irritating him; and again he adverted to the condition of the wreck.

"The hulk, for it was little bet-

ter, was now in the very midst of the current, and drifting at a great rate towards the foot of the precipice, upon whose verge they were placed. Yet it was a long while ere they had a distinct view of the object which they had at first seen as a black speck amongst the waters, and then at a nearer distance, like a whale, which now scarce shows its back-fin above the waves, now throws to view its huge black side. Now, however they could more distinctly observe the appearance of the ship, for the huge swelling waves which bore it forward to the shore, heaved it alternately high upon the surface, and then plunged it into the trough or furrow of the sea. She seemed a vessel of two or three hundred tons, fitted up for defence, for they could see her port-holes. She had been dismayed probably in the gale of the preceding day, and lay water-logged on the waves, a prey to their violence. It appeared certain, that the crew, finding themselves unable either to direct the vessel's course, or to relieve her by pumping, had taken to their boats, and left her to her fate. All apprehensions were therefore unnecessary, so far as the immediate loss of human lives was concerned; and yet it was not without a feeling of breathless awe that Mordaunt and his father beheld the vessel—that rare masterpiece by which human genius aspires to surmount the waves, and contend with the winds, upon the point of falling a prey to them.

"Onward it came, the large black hulk seeming larger at every fathom's length. She came nearer, until she bestrode the summit of one tremendous billow, which rolled on with her unbroken, till the wave and its burthen were precipitated against the rock, and then the triumph of the elements over the work of human hands was at once completed. One wave, we have said, made the wrecked vessel completely manifest in her whole bulk, as it raised her, and bore her onward against the face of the precipice. But when that wave receded from the foot of the rock, the ship had ceased to exist; and the retiring billow only bore back a quantity of beams, planks, casks, and similar objects, which swept out to the offing to be brought in again by the

next wave, and again precipitated upon the face of the rock.

"It was at this moment that Mordaunt conceived he saw a man floating on a plank or water-cask, which, drifting away from the main current, seemed about to go ashore upon a small spot of sand, where the water was shallow, and the waves broke more smoothly. To see the danger, and to exclaim, 'He lives, and may yet be saved!' was the first impulse of the fearless Mordaunt. The next was, after one rapid glance at the front of the cliff, to precipitate himself—such seemed the rapidity of his movement—from the verge, and to commence, by means of slight fissures, projections, and crevices in the rock, a descent, which, to a spectator, appeared little else than an act of absolute insanity.

"'Stop, I command you, rash boy,' said his father; 'the attempt is death. Stop, and take the safer path to the left.' But Mordaunt was already completely engaged in his perilous enterprise.

"'Why should I prevent him?' said his father, checking his anxiety with the stern and unfeeling philosophy whose principles he had adopted. 'Should he die now, full of generous and high feeling, eager in the cause of humanity, happy in the exertion of his own conscious activity and youthful strength—should he die now, will he not escape misanthropy, and remorse, and age, and the consciousness of decaying powers, both of body and mind?—I will not look upon it, however—I will not—I cannot behold this young light so suddenly quenched.'

"He turned from the precipice accordingly, and hastening to the left for more than a quarter of a mile, he proceeded towards a *riva*, or cleft in the rock, containing a path, called Erick's steps, neither safe, indeed, nor easy, but the only one by which the inhabitants of Jarlishof were wont, for any purpose to seek access to the foot of the precipice.

"But long ere Mertoun had reached even the upper end of the pass, his adventurous and active son had accomplished his more desperate enterprise. He had been in vain turned aside from the direct line of descent, by the intervention

of difficulties which he had not seen from above—his rout became only more circuitous, but could not be interrupted. More than once, large fragments to which he was about to intrust his weight, gave way before him, and thundered down into the tormented ocean; and in one or two instances, such detached pieces of rock rushed after him, as if to bear him headlong in their course. A courageous heart, a steady eye, a tenacious hand, and a firm foot, carried him through this desperate attempt; and in the space of seven minutes, he stood at the bottom of the cliff, from the verge of which he had achieved his perilous descent.

"The place which he now occupied was the small projecting spot of stones, sand, and gravel, that extended a little way into the sea, which on the right hand lashed the very bottom of the precipice, and on the left, was scarce divided from it by a small wave-worn portion of beach which extended as far as the foot of the rent in the rocks called Erick's steps, by which Mordaunt's father proposed to descend.

"When the vessel split and went to pieces, all was swallowed up in the ocean, which had, after the first shock, been seen to float upon the waves, excepting only a few pieces of wreck, casks, chests, and the like, which a strong eddy, formed by the reflux of the waves, had landed, or at least grounded, upon the shallow where Mordaunt now stood. Amongst these, his eager eye discovered the object which had at first engaged his attention, and which now, seen at nigher distance, proved to be in truth a man, and in a most precarious state. His arms were still wrapt with a close and convulsive grasp round the plank to which he had clung, in the moment of the shock, but sense and the power of motion were fled; and, from the situation in which the plank lay, partly grounded upon the beach, partly floating in the sea, there was every chance that it might be again washed off shore, in which case the man's death was inevitable. Just as he had made himself aware of these circumstances, Mordaunt beheld a huge wave advancing, and hastening to interpose his aid ere it burst, aware that the reflux might probably sweep away the sufferer.

"He rushed into the surf and fastened on the body with the same tenacity, though under a different impulse, with that wherewith the hound seizes his prey. The strength of the retiring wave proved even stronger than he had expected, and it was not without a struggle for his own life, as well as for that of the stranger, that Mordaunt resisted being swept out to sea with the receding billow, when, though an adroit swimmer, the strength of the tide must either have dashed him against the rocks, or hurried him out to sea. He stood his ground, however, and ere another such billow had returned to the attack, he drew up, upon the small slip of dry sand, both the body of the man, and the plank to which he continued firmly attached. But how to save and to recal the means of ebbing life and strength, and how to remove into a place of greater safety the sufferer, who was incapable of giving any assistance towards his own preservation, were questions which Mordaunt asked himself eagerly, but in vain.

"He looked to the summit of the cliff on which he had left his father, and shouted to him for his assistance; but his eye could not distinguish his form, and his voice was only answered by the scream of the sea-birds. He gazed again on the sufferer—A dress richly laced, according to the fashion of the times, fine linens, and rings upon his fingers, evinced he was a man of superior rank; and his features showed youth and comeliness, notwithstanding they were pallid and disfigured. He still breathed, but so feebly, that his respiration seemed almost imperceptible, and life seemed to keep such slight hold of his frame, that there was every reason to fear it would become altogether extinguished, unless it were speedily reinforced. To loosen the handkerchief from his neck, to raise him with his face towards the breeze, to support him with his arms, was all that Mordaunt could do for his assistance, whilst he anxiously looked round for some one who might lend his aid in dragging the unfortunate man to a more safe situation.

"At this moment he beheld a man advancing slowly and cautiously along the beach. He was in hopes, at first, it was his father, but in-

stantly recollected that he had not time to come round by the circuitous descent, to which he must necessarily have recourse, and besides he saw that the man who approached him was shorter in stature.

"As he came nearer, Mordaunt was at no loss to recognise the pedlar whom the day before he had met with at Harfra, and who was known to him before upon many occasions. He shouted as loud as he could, 'Bryce, hallo! Bryce, come hither!' But the merchant, intent upon picking up some of the spoils of the wreck, and upon dragging them out of the reach of the tide, paid for some time little attention to his shouts.

"When he did at length approach Mordaunt, it was not to lend him his aid, but to remonstrate with him on his rashness in undertaking the charitable office. 'Are you mad?' said he; 'you that have lived sae lang in Zetland, to risk the saving of a drowning man? Wot ye not, if you bring him to life again, he will be sure to do you some capital injury?—Come Master Mordaunt, bear a hand to wha's mair to the purpose. Help me to get ane or twa of these kists ashore before any body else comes, and we shall share, like good Christians, what God sends us, and be thankful.'

"Mordaunt was indeed no stranger to this inhuman superstition, current at a former period among the lower orders of the Zetlanders, and the more generally adopted, perhaps, that it served as an apology for refusing assistance to the unfortunate victims of shipwreck, while they made plunder of their goods. At any rate, the opinion, that to save a drowning man was to run the risk of future injury from him, formed a strange contradiction in the character of these islanders; who, hospitable, generous and disinterested on all other occasions, were sometimes, nevertheless, induced by this superstition to refuse their aid in these mortal emergencies, which were so common upon their rocky and stormy coasts. We are happy to add, that the exhortation and example of the proprietors have eradicated even the traces of this inhuman belief, of which there might be some observed within the memory of those now alive. It is strange that the minds of men should

have ever been hardened towards those involved in a distress to which they themselves were so constantly exposed; but perhaps the constant sight and consciousness of such danger tends to blunt the feelings to its consequences, whether affecting ourselves or others.

"Bryce was remarkably tenacious of this ancient belief; the more so, perhaps, that the mounting of his pack depended less upon the warehouses of Lerwick or Kirkwall, than on the consequences of such a north-western gale as that of the day preceding; for which (being a man who, in his own way, professed great devotion) he seldom failed to express his grateful thanks to heaven. It was indeed said of him, that if he had spent the same time in assisting the wrecked seamen, that he had done in rifling their bales and boxes, he would have saved many lives, and lost much linen. He paid no sort of attention to the repeated entreaties of Mordaunt, although he was now upon the same slip of sand with him—well known to Bryce as a place on which the eddy was likely to land such spoils as the ocean disgorged—but occupied himself busily in securing and appropriating whatever seemed most portable and of greatest value. At length Mordaunt saw the honest pedlar fix his views upon a strong sea-chest, framed of some Indian wood, well secured by brass plates, and seeming to be of a foreign construction. The stout lock resisted all Bryce's efforts to open it, until, with great composure, he plucked from his pocket a very neat hammer and chisel, and began forcing the hinges.

"Incensed at his assurance beyond patience, Mordaunt caught up a wooden stretcher which lay near him, and laying his charge softly on the sand, approached Bryce with a menacing gesture, and exclaimed, 'You cold-blooded, inhuman rascal! either get up instantly and lend me your assistance to recover this man, and bear him out of danger from the surf, or I will not only beat you to a mummy on the spot, but inform Magnus Troil of your thievery, that he may have you flogged till your bones are bare, and then banish you from the main island.'

"The lid of the chest had just

sprung open as this rough address saluted Bryce's ears, and the inside presented a tempting view of wearing apparel for sea and land; shirts, plain and with lace ruffles, a silver compass, a silver-hilted sword, and other valuable articles, which the pedlar well knew to be such as stir in the trade. He was half-disposed to start up, draw the sword, which was a cut-and-thrust, and 'darraign battaile,' as Spencer says, rather than quit his prize, or brook interruption. Being, though short, a stout square-made personage, and not much past the prime of life, having besides the better weapon, he might have given Mordaunt more trouble than his benevolent knight-errantry deserved.

"Already, as with vehemence he repeated his injunctions that Bryce should forbear his plunder, and come to the assistance of the dying man, the pedlar retorted with a voice of defiance, 'Dinna swear, sir; dinna swear, sir—I will endure no swearing in my presence; and if you lay a finger on me, that am taking the lawful spoil of the Egyptians, I will give ye a lesson ye shall remember from this day to Yule.'

"Mordaunt would speedily have put the pedlar's courage to the test, but a voice behind him suddenly said, 'Forbear!' It was the voice of Norna of the Fitful-head, who, during the heat of their altercation, had approached them unobserved. 'Forbear,' she repeated, and Bryce, do thou render Mordaunt the assistance he requires; it shall avail thee more, and it is I who say the word, than all that you could earn to-day besides.'

"'It is se'enteen hundreu 'nen,' said the pedlar, giving a tweak to one of the shirts, in that knowing manner with which matrons and judges ascertain the texture of the loom; 'it's se'enteen hundred linen, and as strong as an' it were dowlas. Nevertheless, mother, your bidding is to be done; and I would have done Mr. Mordaunt's bidding too,' he added, relaxing from his note of defiance, into the deferential whining tone with which he cajoled his customers, 'if he hadna' made use of profane oaths, which made my very flesh grue, and caused me, in some sort, to forget myself.' He then took a flask from his pocket, and approached the shipwrecked man.

'It's the best of brandy,' he said—'and if that does na' cure him, I ken nought that will.' So saying, he took a preliminary gulph himself, as if to show the quality of the liquor, and was about to put it to the man's mouth, when suddenly withholding his hand, he looked at Norna—'You insure me against all risk of evil from him, if I am to render him my help?—Ye ken yoursel' what folks say, mother.'

"For all other answer, Norna took the bottle from the pedlar's hand, and began to chafe the temples and throat of the shipwrecked man, directing Mordaunt how to hold his head, so as to afford him the means of disgorging the sea-water which he had swallowed during his immersion.

"The pedlar looked on inactive for a moment, and then said, 'To be sure there is not the same risk in helping him now he is out of the water, and lying high and dry on the beach; and, to be sure, the principal danger is, to those that first touch him; and, to be sure, it is a world's pity to see how these rings are pinching the puir creature's swald fingers—they make his hand as blue as a partan's back before boiling.' So saying, he seized one of the man's cold hands, which had just, by a tremulous motion, indicated the return of life, and began his charitable work of removing the rings, which seemed to be of some value.

"As you love your life, forbear,' said Norna sternly, 'or I will lay that on you which shall spoil your travels through the isles.'

"Now, for mercy's sake, mother, say nae mair about it,' said the pedlar, 'and I'll e'en do your pleasure in your ain way. I did feel a rheumatize in my back-spauld yestreen; and it wad be a sair thing for the like of me to be debarred my quiet walk round the country, in the way of trade—making the honest penny, and helping myself with what Providence sends on our coasts.'

"Peace, then,' said the woman—'Peace, as thou wouldest not rue it; and take this man on thy broad shoulders. His life is of value, and you will be rewarded.'

"I had muckle need,' said the pedlar, pensively looking at the lidless chest, and the other matters which strewed the sand, 'for he has

comed between me and as mickle sprecherie as wad hae made a man of me for the rest of my life; and now it maun lie here till the next tide sweep it a' down the Roost, after them that aught it yesterday morning.'

"Fear not,' said Norna, 'it will come to man's use. See, there come carrion-crows, of scent as keen as thine own.'

"She spoke truly, for several of the people from the hamlet of Jarlshof were now hastening along the beach, to have their share in the spoil. The pedlar beheld them approach with a deep groan. 'Ay, ay,' he said, 'the folk of Jarlshof, they will make clean wark; they are ken'd for that far and wide; they winna leave the value of a rotten ratlin; and what's waur, there is nae o' them has mense or sense enough to give thanks for the mercies when they have gotten them. There is the auld Ranzelman, Neil Ronaldson, that canna walk a mile to hear the minister, but he will hirkple ten if he hears of a ship embayed.'

"Norna, however, seemed to possess over him so complete an ascendancy, that he no longer hesitated to take the man, who now gave strong symptoms of reviving existence, upon his shoulders; and, assisted by Mordaunt, trudged along the sea-beach with his burden, without farther remonstrance. Ere he was borne off, the strange, pointed to the chest, and attempted to mutter something, to which Norna replied, 'Enough. It shall be secured.'

"Advancing towards the passage called Erick's steps, by which they were to ascend the cliffs, they met the people from Jarlshof, hastening in the opposite direction. Man and woman, as they passed, reverently made room for Norna, and saluted her—not without an expression of fear upon some of their faces. She passed them a few paces, and then turning back called aloud to the Ranzelman, who (though the practice was more common than legal) was attending the rest of the hamlet upon this plundering expedition. 'Niel Ronaldson,' she said, 'mark my words. There stands yonder a chest, from which the lid has been just prized off. Look it be brought down to your own house at Jarlshof, just as it now is. Beware of moving

or touching the slightest article. He were better in his grave, that so much as looks at the contents. I speak not for nought, nor in aught will I be disobeyed.'

"Your pleasure shall be done, mother,' said Ronaldson. 'I warrant we will not break bulk, since sic is your bidding.'

"Far behind the rest of the villagers, followed an old woman, talking to herself, and cursing her own decrepitude, which kept her the last of the party, yet pressing forward with all her might to get her share of the spoil.

"When they met her, Mordaunt was astonished to recognise his father's old housekeeper. 'How now,' he said, 'Swertha, what make you so far from home?'

"Just e'en daikering out to look after my auld master and your honour,' replied Swertha, who felt like a criminal caught in the manner; for, on more occasions than one, Mr. Mertoun had intimated his high disapprobation of such excursions as she was at present engaged in.

"But Mordaunt was too much engaged with his own thoughts to take much notice of her delinquency. 'Have you seen my father?' he said.

"And that I have,' replied Swertha—'The gude gentleman was ganging to hirsel himself doun Erick's steps, whilk would have been the ending of him, that is in no way a crag's-man. Sae I e'en gat him wiled away hame—and I was just seeking you that you may gang after him to the hall-house, for, to my thought, he is far frae weel.'

"My father unwell?' said Mordaunt, remembering the faintness he had exhibited at the commencement of the morning's walk.

"Far frae weel—far frae weel,' groaned out Swertha, with a piteous shake of the head—'white o' the gills—white o' the gills—and him to think of coming down the riva!'

"Return home, Mordaunt,' said Norna, who was listening to what had passed. 'I will see all that is necessary done for this man's relief, and you will find him at the Ranzelman's, when you list to inquire. You cannot help him more than you already have done.'

"Mordaunt felt this was true, and, commanding Swertha to follow

him home instantly, betook himself to the path homeward.

"Swertha hobbled reluctantly after her young master in the same direction, until she lost sight of him on his entering the cleft of the rock, then instantly turned about, muttering to herself, 'Haste home, in good sooth?—haste home, and lose the best chance of getting a new rokelay and owrelay that I have had these ten years? by my certie, na—It's seldom sic rich Godsend comes on our coast—no since the Jenny and James came ashore in king Charlie's time.'

"So saying, she mended her pace as well as she could, and a willing mind making amends for frail limbs, posted on with wonderful dispatch to put in for her share of the spoil. She soon reached the beach, where the Ranzelman, stuffing his own pouches all the while, was exhorting the rest to part things fair, and be neighbourly, and to give to the auld and helpless a share of what was going, which, he charitably remarked, 'would bring a blessing on the shore, and send them mair wrecks ere winter.'

We have room but for one more extract of a somewhat different nature.

"It was a mild summer day; the beams of the sun, as is not uncommon in Zetland, were moderated and shaded by a silvery haze, which filled the atmosphere, and, destroying the strong contrast of light and shade, gave even to noon the sober livery of the evening twilight. The little lake, not three-quarters of a mile in circuit, lay in profound quiet; its surface undimpled, save when one of the numerous water-fowl, which glided on its surface, dived for an instant under it. The depth of the water gave the whole that cerulean tint of bluish green, which occasioned its being called the Green Loch; and at present, it formed so perfect a mirror to the bleak hills by which it was surrounded, and which lay reflected, on its bosom, that it was difficult to distinguish the water from the land; nay, in the shadowy uncertainty occasioned by the thin haze, a stranger could scarce have been sensible that a sheet of water lay before him. A scene of more complete solitude, having all its peculiarities heightened by the ex-

treme serenity of the weather, the quiet gray composed tone of the atmosphere, and the perfect silence of the elements, could hardly be imagined. The very aquatic birds, who frequented the spot in great numbers, forbore their usual flight and screams, and floated in profound tranquillity upon the silent water.

"Without taking any determined aim—without having any determined purpose—without almost thinking what he was about, Mordaunt presented his fowling-piece, and fired across the lake. The large swan-shot dimpled its surface like a partial shower of hail—the hills took up the noise of the report, and repeated it again, and again, and again, to all their echoes; the water-fowl took to wing in eddying and confused wheel, answering the echoes with a thousand varying screams, from the deep note of the swabie or swatback, to the querulous cry of the turrack and kittiewake.

"Mordaunt looked for a moment on the clamorous crowd with a feeling of resentment, which he felt disposed at the moment to apply to all nature, and all her objects, animate, or inanimate, however little concerned with the cause of his internal mortification.

"'Ay, ay,' he said, 'wheel, dive, scream, and clamour as you will, and all because you have seen a strange sight, and heard an unusual sound. There is many a one like you in this round world. But you, at least, shall learn,' he added, as he re-loaded his gun, 'that strange sights and strange sounds, ay, and strange acquaintances to boot, have sometimes a little shade of danger connected with them.—But why should I wreak my own vexation on these harmless sea-gulls?' he subjoined, after a moment's pause; 'they have nothing to do with the friends that have forgotten me.—I loved them all so well,—and to be so soon given up for the first stranger whom chance threw on the coast?'

"As he stood resting upon his gun, and abandoning his mind to the course of these unpleasant reflections, his meditations were unexpectedly interrupted by some one touching his shoulder. He looked around, and saw Norna of the Fitfulhead, wrapped in her dark and ample mantle. She had seen him from

the brow of the hill, and had descended to the lake, through a small ravine which concealed her, until she came with noiseless step so close to him that he turned round at her touch.

"Mordaunt Mertoun was by nature neither timorous nor credulous, and a course of reading more extensive than usual, had, in some degree, fortified his mind against the attacks of superstition; but he would have been an actual prodigy, if, living in Zetland in the end of the seventeenth century, he had possessed the philosophy which did not exist in Scotland generally, until at least two generations later. He doubted in his own mind the extent, nay, the very existence, of Norna's supernatural attributes, which was a high flight of incredulity in the country where they were universally received; but still his incredulity went no farther than doubts. She was unquestionably an extraordinary woman, gifted with an energy above others, acting upon motives peculiar to herself, and apparently independent on mere earthly considerations. Impressed with these ideas, which he had imbibed from his youth, it was not without something like alarm, that he beheld this mysterious female standing of a sudden so close beside him, and looking upon him with such sad and severe eyes, as those with which the Fatal Virgins, who, according to northern mythology, were called the *Valkyriur*, or 'chusers of the slain,' were supposed to regard the young champions whom they selected to share the banquet of Odin.

"It was, indeed, reckoned unlucky, to say the least, to meet with Norna suddenly alone, and in a place remote from witnesses; and she was supposed, on such occasions, to have been usually a prophetic of evil, as well as an omen of misfortune, to those who had such a rencontre. There were few or none of the islanders, however familiarised with her occasional appearance in society, that would not have trembled to meet her on the solitary banks of the Green Loch.

"'I bring you no evil, Mordaunt Mertoun,' she said, reading perhaps something of this superstitious feeling in the looks of the young man. 'Evil from me you never felt, and never will.'

"Nor do I fear any," said Mordaunt, exerting himself to throw aside an apprehension which he felt to be unmanly. "Why should I, mother, you have been ever my friend?"

"Yet, Mordaunt, thou art not of our region; but to none of Zetland blood, no, not even to those who sit around the hearth-stone of Magnus Troil, the noble descendants of the ancient Jarls of Orkney, am I more a well-wisher, than I am to thee, thou kind and brave-hearted boy. When I hung around thy neck that gifted chain, which all in our isles know was wrought by no earthly artist, but by the Drows, in the secret recesses of their caverns, thou wert then but fifteen years old; yet thy foot had been on the maiden-skierrie of Northmaven, known before but to the webbed sole of the swartback, and thy skiff had been in the deepest cavern of Brinnastir, where the *haaf-fish** had before slumbered in dark obscurity. Therefore I gave thee that noble gift; and well thou knowest, that since that day, every eye in these isles has looked on thee as a son, or as a brother, endowed beyond other youths, and the favoured of those whose hour of power is when the night meets with the day.†

"Alas! mother," said Mordaunt, "your kind gift may have given me favour, but it has not been able to keep it for me, or I have not been able to keep it for myself?—What matters it? I shall learn to set as

* "The larger seal, or sea-calf, which seeks the most solitary recesses for its abode. See Dr. Edmondstone's *Zetland*, vol. II. p. 294.

† "The Drows, or Trows, the legitimate successors of the northern *duergar*, and somewhat allied to the fairies, reside like them in the interior of green hills and caverns, and are most powerful at midnight. They are curious artificers in iron, as well as in the precious metals, and are sometimes propitious to mortals, but more frequently capricious and malevolent. Among the common people of Zetland, their existence still forms an article of universal belief. In the neighbouring isles of Ferøe, they are called *Foddenskencand*, or subterranean people; and Lucas Jacobson Debes, well acquainted with their nature, assures us that they inhabit in those places which are polluted with the effusion of blood, or the practice of any crying sin. They have a government, which seems to be monarchical.

little by others as they do by me. My father says that I shall soon leave these islands, and therefore, Mother Norna, I will return to you your fairy gift, that it may bring more lasting luck to some other than it has done to me."

"Despise not the gift of the nameless race," said Norna, frowning, then suddenly changing her tone of displeasure to that of mournful solemnity, she added,—"Despise them not, but, O Mordaunt, court them not! Sit down on that gray stone—thou art the son of my adoption, and I will doff, as far as I may, those attributes that sever me from the common mass of humanity, and speak with you as a parent with a child."

"There was a tremulous tone of grief which mingled with the loftiness of her language and carriage, and was calculated to excite sympathy, as well as to attract attention. Mordaunt sat down on the rock which she pointed out, a fragment, which, with many others that lay scattered around, had been torn by some winter storm from the precipice at the foot of which it lay, upon the very verge of the water. Norna took her own seat on a stone at about three feet distance, adjusted her mantle so that little more than her forehead, her eyes, and a single lock of her gray hair were seen from beneath the shade of her dark wadmaal cloak, and then proceeded in a tone in which the imaginary consequence and importance so often assumed by lunacy, seemed to contend against the deep workings of some extraordinary and deeply-rooted mental affliction.

"I was not always," she said, "that which I now am. I was not always the wise, the powerful, the commanding, before whom the young stand abashed, and the old uncover their gray heads. There was a time when my appearance did not silence mirth, when I sympathised with human passion, and had my own share in human joy and sorrow. It was a time of helplessness—It was a time of folly—it was a time of idle and unfruitful laughter—it was a time of causeless and senseless tears; and yet, with its follies and its sorrows and its weaknesses, what would Norna of Fitful-head give to be again the unmarked

and happy maiden that she was in her early days! Hear me, Mordaunt, and bear with me; for you hear me utter complaints which have never sounded into mortal ears, and which in mortal ears shall never sound again. I will be what I ought," she continued, starting up and extending her lean and withered arm, "the queen and protectress of these wild and neglected isles—I will be her whose foot the waves wet not, save by her permission; ay, even though its rage be at its wildest madness—whose robe the whirlwind respects when it rends the house-rigging from the roof-tree. Bear me witness, Mordaunt Mertoun—you heard my words at Harfra—you saw the tempest sink before them—speak bear me witness."

"To have contradicted her in this strain of high-toned enthusiasm, would have been cruel and unavailing, even had Mordaunt been more decidedly convinced than he was, that an insane woman, not one of supernatural power, stood before him.

"I heard you sing," he replied, "and I saw the tempest abate."

"Abate," exclaimed Norna, striking the ground impatiently with her staff of black oak; "thou speakest it but half—it sunk at once—sunk in shorter space than the child that is hushed to silence by the nurse. Enough, you know my power—but you know not—mortal man knows not, and never shall know, the price which I paid to attain it. No, Mordaunt, never for the widest sway that the ancient Norsemen boasted, when their banners waved victorious from Bergen to Palestine; never for all that the round world contains, do thou barter thy peace of mind for such greatness as Norna's." She resumed her seat upon the rock, drew the mantle over her face, rested her head upon her hands, and by the convulsive motion which agitated her bosom, appeared to be weeping bitterly.

"Good Norna," said Mordaunt, and paused, scarce knowing what to say that might console the unhappy woman—"Good Norna," he again resumed, "if there be aught on your mind that troubles it, were you not best to go to the worthy minister at Dunrossness? Men say you have not for many years been in a Chris-

tian congregation—that cannot be well or right. You are yourself well known as a healer of bodily disease; but when the mind is sick, we should draw to the Physician of our souls.’

“Norna had raised her person slowly from the stooping posture in which she sate: but at length she started up on her feet, threw back her mantle, extended her arm, and while her lip foamed, and her eye sparkled, exclaimed in a tone resembling a scream,—‘Me did you speak—me did you bid seek out a priest!—Would you kill the good man with horror?—Me in a Christian congregation!—Would you have the roof to fall on the sackless assembly, and mingle their blood with their worship? I—I seek to the good Physician?—Would you have the fiend claim his prey openly before God and man?’

“The extreme agitation of the unhappy speaker naturally led Mordaunt to the conclusion, which was generally adopted and accredited in that superstitious country and period. ‘Wretched woman,’ he said, ‘if indeed thou hast leagued thyself with the Powers of Evil, why should you not seek even yet for repentance? But do as thou wilt, I cannot, dare not, as a Christian, abide longer with you; and take again your gift,’ he said, offering back the chain. ‘Good can never come of it, if indeed evil hath not come already.’

“‘Be still and hear me, thou foolish boy,’ said Norna calmly, as if she had been restored to reason by the alarm and horror which she perceived in Mordaunt’s countenance; ‘hear me, I say. I am not of those who have leagued themselves with the Enemy of mankind, or derive skill or power from his ministry. And although the unearthly powers were propitiated by a sacrifice which human tongue can never utter, yet, God knows, my guilt in that offering was no more than that of the blind man who falls from the precipice which he could neither see nor shun. O leave me not—shun me not in this hour of weakness! Remain with me till the temptation be passed, or I will plunge myself into that lake, and rid myself at once of my power and my wretchedness.’”

[To be continued.]

On the Rocky Mountain Sheep of the Americans. By Professor JAMESON.

[From the Third Volume of the Memoirs of the Wernerian Natural History Society.]

[From the Farmer’s Mag. for August.]

The Sanish missionaries in California, so early as 1697, make particular mention of a ‘remarkable species of sheep’ as occurring in that country; and it is again noticed by Venegas, in his History of California. Lewis and Clarke also heard of it, and obtained some skins from the Rocky Mountains. I now present to the society a skin of this animal, which was sent from Hudson’s Bay by Mr. Auld, formerly of that country, and who obtained it from the Rocky Mountains. It appears to be the Rocky Mountain Sheep of the Americans. A simple inspection of the specimen before us, proves that it cannot be a species of the genus *Ovis*; and the form of the horns, and shape of the body, will not allow of its being placed with the Capræ or Goats; while its form, beard and fur, remove it from the genus *Antelope*. We are of opinion that it forms a species of a genus intermediate between the *Antelope* and *Goat*. On examining the fleece, I was particularly struck with its uncommon fineness; and it occurred to me that an animal, inhabiting the temperate regions of the Rock Mountains, with so valuable a fleece, might be easily procured, and readily introduced into this country, and form a valuable addition to our wool-bearing animals. Strongly impressed with this view, I now beg leave to suggest to the society, providing they agree with me in opinion as to the value of this animal, to take steps for procuring live specimens from America, in order to make the experiment of introducing it into Scotland.

The society having taken this proposal into consideration, appointed a committee of its members to consult with the directors of the Highland Society of Scotland, on this important proposal; and also to request Mr. Thomas Laurie, who has long been distinguished for his intimate acquaintance with rural affairs, to report as to the value of the wool, &c.

The following is the report of Mr. Laurie—

‘The skin submitted to us, is, in the minutes of the society, denominated that of “The Rocky Mountain Sheep;” and, from the wool with which it is covered, it may certainly be considered as nearly allied to that genus of quadrupeds, though, had it wanted this woolly covering, we would probably have been inclined to consider it as more allied to the goat. The general figure of this skin is very different from that of any sheep’s skin I have ever seen. The difference is perhaps most remarkable in

the length and figure of the neck, which, in no slight degree, resembles that of a thoroughbred horse. The general structure of the head, externally viewed, does not appear to vary from that of other sheep, more than might be ascribed to accidental circumstances. To this remark, however, the horns form a remarkable exception. Their position is very different from what is observed in the common sheep. Their curvature is also different—circumstances which deserve more particular notice, on account of their being connected with other important diversities of character. These are the smoothness of the horns, and their circular, or rather conical shape—two particulars in which they differ from the horns of every species of sheep with which either history or observation has made us acquainted. The blackness of the horns, compared with the whiteness of the wool, may also be mentioned, though, in other circumstances, unworthy of notice. The legs, too, of this skin, are covered with longer and coarser hair than what is to be found on those of the common sheep. The horns resemble those of a common goat, more than of a sheep, in regard to position, colour, and texture. But the goat’s horns are flat on the under part, or that next the neck, so as to form the side of a pyramid. In other respects they are conical. The horns of the Rocky Mountain sheep are completely conical; and, in shape, resemble the horns of an ox more than those of either a goat or any of the varieties of sheep.

‘There is another circumstance of apparent resemblance to the goat, which may be noticed. The skin exhibited has a ridge of hair along the back, considerably longer than the general covering, which is continued up the neck, in the form of a mane, thicker and longer than that on the back. It has also a thick long beard, and a space on each quarter covered with long shaggy hair. In these particulars there is a resemblance to the male of the common goat and I think it probable the skin belongs to the male sex. In the length of the neck, compared with that of the body, there is also a resemblance to the common goat. But, in all these points of resemblance, there are specific differences, which a comparison will best illustrate.

‘The wool, forming the principal covering of the skin, is a strong reason for not classing the animal with the family of goats. It is no doubt true, that the goat of the East yields a fur, in many respects, resembling wool; and it may be difficult, in some cases, to distinguish between hair and wool, especially from small specimens. But, in judging from any considerable quantity, such as the covering of a whole skin, there would be little difficulty in determining whether the substance should be called

hair or wool; and, so far as I know, there is no good authority for any species of goat ever having been found with a covering wholly or chiefly of wool.

It may be unnecessary to enlarge farther upon the classification of the animal, as the question cannot perhaps be satisfactorily decided, without the possession of a living specimen.

The skin seems to be that of a full grown animal. A number of observations might be offered in illustration of this opinion. But it may suffice to state, that the horns, and general aspect of the head, have all the appearance of maturity. The teeth, in particular, are evidently full grown, and such as are observed in a sheep upwards of three years old. Four of them, on one side, are more or less broken, which may have occurred either from accident or age.

The wool, which forms the chief covering of the skin, is fully an inch and a half long, and is of the very finest quality. It is unlike the fleece of the common sheep, which contains a variety of different kinds, suitable to the fabrication of articles very dissimilar in their nature, and requires much care to distribute them in their proper order. The fleece under consideration is wholly fine. That on the fore part of the skin has all the apparent qualities of fine wool. On the back part, it very much resembles cotton. The whole fleece is much mixed with hairs; and on those parts where the hairs are long and pendant, there is almost no wool.

The wool, if separated from the hairs, would, I think, be adapted for the finest purposes of manufacture. But, in its present state, it could not be so applied, though many of the hairs would fly off in the manufacturing processes. It is however, highly probable, that, by a careful selection of breeding stock, the hairs might, in a great measure, or perhaps entirely disappear in the course of a very few generations. It has always been observed, that, where sheep have been neglected, their wool has been comparatively coarse; and wherever they have been properly treated, and due advantage taken of the accidental finer varieties, the quality of their wool has been proportionably ameliorated. Indeed, the improvement in the qualities of wool has uniformly been marked as keeping pace with the progress of arts and civilization. I am therefore of opinion, that the wool of the Rocky Mountain sheep would soon become a great acquisition to the manufacturers of this country, where the animal which yields it to experience the judicious treatment of many British flocks; and there can be no doubt, that such an experiment would be well worth trying. Under this impression, I cannot help expressing a wish, that the society, to whose consideration these remarks are submitted, would exert their influ-

ence for accomplishing an object which may prove of national importance.

At the same time, it is proper to observe, that sheep are not to be considered as valuable for their fleece alone. They merit attention as furnishing food as well as clothing to man, and any particular race is of value only in so far as these important objects are combined. How far the Rocky Mountain sheep might prove useful as furnishing food, I have had no opportunities of ascertaining. As to the value of the wool, if obtained in purity, there seems no room for doubt; and I may state, that I have shown specimens to different wool dealers, all of whom expressed their admiration of their quality, and even an anxiety to purchase. From these specimens, however, it may be fair to add, the hairs had been in a great measure extracted.

It may be mentioned, in conclusion, that it cannot be known from the skin exhibited, whether or not the Rocky Mountain Sheep produces what dealers would call *long wool*. The longest observed on the skin is scarcely exceeding two inches, being about one-half the usual length of the full-grown fleeces of the mountain sheep of Great Britain, or what is called the carding and clothing wool, which is even much shorter than the comb-sort used for worsted stuffs, &c. the comparative shortness, however, of the wool under consideration, proves nothing. Sheep cast their wool annually, if not shorn, and a new coat springs up. This generally takes place in this country about the month of June. If, therefore, the animal which produced the wool under consideration, was killed soon after casting its old wool, the new wool would not be at its full growth. This too is a point which could be best determined by procuring living specimens of the animal, and observing their habits and changes.

Professor Jameson's proposal having been submitted to the Directors of the Highland Society, they expressed their willingness to cooperate, and appointed a Committee to confer with a Committee of the Wernerian Society on the business; and it is in contemplation to communicate with the Right Honourable the Earl of Dalhousie (a Vice President of the Society, and now Governor-General of Canada), and request the good offices of that patriotic nobleman towards the sending home of living specimens of the animal.

VARIETIES.

[From the Examiner.]

It has long been recommended by several experimental agriculturists, particularly on the continent, to reap corn before it is perfectly ripe; and it is stated by them that many practical farmers have this season obtained an immense advantage by adopting this process, the

theory of which may be comprised in the following particulars, as given by M. Salles, of the Agricultural Society of Beziers:—"Corn, reaped eight days before the usual time, is, in the first place secured from the dangers which threaten it at that time: this is only accidental; but a positive advantage is, that the grain is fuller, larger, finer, and it is never attacked by the weevil. The truth of these assertions has been proved by the most conclusive comparative experiments upon a piece of corn, one half of which was reaped before the usual time, and the other half at the degree of maturity fixed by the ordinary practice. The first portion gave a hectolitre of corn more for half a hector of land. Afterwards an equal quantity of flour from the wheat of each portion was made into bread; that of the corn reaped green gave seven pounds more than the other in six decalitres. Lastly, the weevil attacked the corn which was cut ripe; the other was exempt from it. The proper time for reaping is when the grain, on being pressed between the fingers, has a doughy appearance, like the crumb of bread just hot from the oven, when pressed in the same manner."—*Bath paper*.

A man who some time since ran against the Ipswich coach, from London to Ipswich, and beat it, ran ten miles within an hour at Maldon fair. The first two miles he accomplished in nine minutes; the second two, in nine and a half ditto; the third two, in ten ditto; and the whole in 57 minutes and a half.

So dense was the fog on Sunday night on the northern road, that at Finchley, Whetstone, Barnet, St. Albans, &c.; the mail guards were obliged to descend from their stations, and walk before the coaches with the lamps in their hands; and persons going from, or returning to town, in gigs, &c. found it necessary to have people preceding them with lighted links. In two instances the mails had narrow escapes of being upset, the horses having got off the road.

A hare perfectly black was caught a few days ago on Woodland's Farm, near Beaconsfield, by Mr. Woodman.

There is now living, says the Journal des Debats, at Fresne en Wœvre, arrondissement of Verdun, a woman aged 105, who walks upright, and without a stick, and sews and reads without spectacles.

The Abbe Raynal, and the Abbe Galignani, who were both incessant talkers, were invited to the house of a mutual friend, who wished to amuse himself by bringing them together. Galignani began the conversation, engrossed it so thoroughly, and talked with such volubility, that Raynal could not find the least opening to introduce a word; but turning to his friend, said, in a low voice, "*S'il crache, il est perdu.*" If he stops to spit it is all over with him.

The general aspect which an English Sunday presents to a foreigner, is well described in the following extract from the letter of a French gentleman resident in London:—"Nothing can be conceived more tiresome and melancholy than an English Sunday, whether in London or the country. The theatres are all closed; the taverns are only opened at certain hours, and all gaming, dancing, and music are strictly prohibited. The tolls established at the turnpikes are increased, and a large portion of the population spend the day in traversing the Parks, or in strolling to gardens in the suburbs, where every man drinks his tea or beer, without speaking to his neighbour. It is the finest sight in the world see men, women, and children looking mournfully at each other, as they walk along and yawn, or else seated with their arms across at their windows, which are kept shut in all seasons of the year, counting the passengers as they pass."

Letters from Constantinople, which reach to the 20th August, announce that the inhabitants enjoy in that capital a tranquillity which leaves nothing further to be desired, *as not more than two or three murders are committed per day.*

The duke of Marlborough was taxed by William by betraying the secret of a design on Brest to the French king. "Upon my honour, sir," said the duke, "I told it to nobody but my wife."—"I did not tell it to mine," replied the monarch.—The fact was, Marlborough's wife had told the secret to her sister, the popish duchess of Tyrconnel.

Mr. Walpole says, that his father, sir Robert, used to receive letters from the Pretender, which he always carried to George the Second, and got them endorsed by his majesty!—Mr. Walpole cries up his father to the skies, and yet tells such anecdotes as these of him, which clearly prove, that the prime minister was a pitiful hypocrite and informer, and his "gracious sovereign" an equally paltry personage.—Talk of *low* people, indeed! where is the difference between such doings and those of Oliver and Castles?

It is a remark made by Montesquieu, that in proportion as any people love liberty, the milder are their punishments. The ancient Germans and Scandinavians, the most brave and free race of men that perhaps ever existed, knew scarcely any other than pecuniary penalties. In the Eastern despotisms, blood is for ever flowing, and corporal punishments follow upon the smallest violations of the law. England did better once; but now a man's life is valued at a pound note, and less, and men and boys are cut to the bone for slight offences!

Swift, alluding in a letter to the frequent instances of a broken correspondence after a long absence, gives the following natural account of the causes:—"At first one omits writing for a little

while—and then one stays a little while longer to consider of excuses—and at last it grows desperate, and one does not write at all. At this rate (he adds) I have served others, and have been served myself."

It has always struck us, that the placing the notes of interrogation and admiration at the conclusion only of the passages they are designed to mark, was a very imperfect mode. There is a letter extant from the celebrated author of "Sylvia," John Evelyn, in which he touches upon this subject in the following manner:—"That there might be excogitated some new periods and accents, besides such as our critics and grammarians use, to assist, inspirit, and modify the pronunciation of sentences, and to stand as marks *beforehand* how the voice and tone is to be governed in reading or reciting, and for varying the tone of the voice as the subject is affected. This would be of great use in the reading or pronouncing of verses, and of no small importance to the stage, the pulpit, and the bar.

PLATONIC LOVE.—I forgot to tell you a good answer of lady Pomfret to Mr. —, who asked her if she did not approve Platonic love. "Lord, sir," said she, "I am sure any one that knows me, never heard that I had any love but one, and there sit two proofs of it," pointing to her two daughters.—*Correspondence of Horace Walpole.*

Lord Londonderry called Reynolds the Informer the Saviour of Ireland; and so he lately termed the Allied Promise-breakers the Saviours of Europe. Mr. Oliver, too—just now gratified with place and pension—is, we suppose, another of his lordship's Saviours. The never-to-be-forgotten author of the *Fudge Family* says that these informing worthies should go by the name of *Salvators*—"as the man who some years since saved the late Right Hon. Geo. Rose from drowning, was ever after called *Salvator Rosa*."

My Lord A*** does not keep a fast: he is going to marry one of the plump C***s:—they call him the Noble Lord upon the Woolsack.—*H. Walpole.*

INN NAMES.—The "Bull and Gate," and "Bull and Mouth," are well known corruptions of "Boulogne Gate" and "Boulogne Mouth;" but that of the "Bag of Nails," at Chelsea, is still more curious, being derived from "Bacchanals."

The Holsteiners, it has been observed, are more like the English than any other people of Europe. Lord Molesworth notices this similarity, and a traveller who was at Rainsburgh in 1632, says, "Among other things I put myself to mark the carriage of the Holstein gentlemen, as they were going in and coming out of the parliament-house; and observing well their physiognomies, their complexions and gait, I thought verily I was in England; for they resemble the

English more than either Welsh or Scot, (though cohabiting upon the same island) or any other people that ever I saw yet; which makes me verily believe that the English nation came first from this lower circle of Saxony. And there is one thing that strengtheneth me in this belief, that there is an ancient town hard by, called Lunden, and an island called Anglia." This remark is confirmed by the most diligent inquirers, who place the country of our Saxon ancestors in the Cimbric Chersonese, in the tracts of land since known by the name of Jutland, Angeland and Holstein.

England is one of the most *civilized* countries in Europe: Greenland is one of the most *barbarous*; yet in the latter country, though they have neither acts of parliament, nor kings, nor clerical magistrates, blows and murders are almost unknown to them: they are neither quarrelsome, mischievous, nor warlike, but live with great union and tranquillity.

To *crack* is to boast:—perhaps from a certain king of Denmark, Rolf, surnamed Krack, who, "when one of his companions proposed to offer a sacrifice to Odin, said that he feared nothing from that blustering spirit, and that he should never stand in awe of him."—"But that was a crack."

PRACTICE OF THE BAR.—It is the modern practice for barristers to advocate any cause for which they are hired. This has not always been so. It is recorded, that Sir Thomas More, when a young man even, never could be tempted, whatever the fee offered, to undertake a cause he deemed bad. Lawyers may sophisticate on this point as much as they please; but disinterested men at once perceive the ill effects of the present practice.

BOILING TO DEATH.—One Rouse, who had attempted to poison Fisher, bishop of Rochester, (who was afterwards murdered in his 77th year by the first "Defender of the Faith," the voluptuous and bloodthirsty Henry the Eighth,) was actually *boiled* to death in Smithfield for his offence! The law which thus punished him was subsequently repealed, though more unjust ones still remain on the statute-book.

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